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ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles County Board of Education's campaign to improve the public's confidence in public education is described. Education as an investment rather than a cost is the theme of the campaign. The coordinated approach is adopted from campaigns developed by 11 national educational agencies. The following topics are included in this booklet: (1) six public confidence objectives; (2) five components of the campaign; (3) six ways in which school district representatives can participate and make use of existing strategies and materials; (4) examples of participatory campaign efforts by two school districts; (5) examples of visibility items which can be purchased and possible promotional activities for school districts; (6) four countywide visibility activities that can benefit the district; and (7) ways an individual, group, agency, or organization can be involved in the campaign by committing time, money, resources, and/or accepting responsibility for specific projects. A sample resolution for any organization wishing to endorse the campaign is included. This document was selected by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Task Force on Public Confidence as descriptive of a promising practice or exemplary project worthy of highlighting for the California educational community. (JW)

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Public Education ...a sound investment in AMERICA

CAMPAIGN BOOKLET

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SCHOOLS OFFICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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WHY A CAMPAIGN?

Public confidence in public education in California is not what it should be. Barraged by survey results, media coverage, and word of mouth, the majority of citizens are asking, "What's wrong with our schools?"

The answer is, "Not nearly as much as is right."

But that message is not being communicated clearly and consistently. That message is not being supported by visible evidence that California's public schools are working to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society. And that message will never be communicated without a coordinated, carefully planned effort.

The Los Angeles County Board of Education is responding to that communication challenge. The County Board has adopted as an official project the coordination of a campaign to improve the public's confidence in public education as an institution. Working with local school districts, professional associations, and other organizations, the County Board will help educators unite in an effort to inform the public of the successes of public education and the ways the institution is trying to solve its problems.

INVESTMENT VS. COST

Unfortunately, a prevalent public attitude is that public education simply represents a cost to the taxpayer. Given accurate information, however, most people will reach the conclusion that expenditures for public education represent an investment . . . an investment in their community, their state, and their nation.

It is upon the theme of investment rather than cost that the County Board of Education has chosen to base its public confidence campaign efforts. Adopting an approach developed by eleven national educational agencies, the Board is providing a framework for a coordinated effort in Los Angeles County to improve public confidence in public education. (A list of the eleven national agencies appears on page 7.)

The theme of the Los Angeles County public confidence campaign is:

Public Education ...a sound investment in AMERICA.

The approach of the campaign is to promote public education as an institution rather than to promote individual school districts. The campaign's "umbrella" theme--"Public Education: A Sound Investment in America"--reinforces the message that public education is an investment in America's future rather than a drain on the public coffers.

Beneath this umbrella theme, districts can and should continue to conduct individualized public information and public relations activities. However, participants in the campaign will be asked to resist the temptation to localize the strategies of the public confidence campaign. By maintaining the integrity of the theme, a louder, more consistent message can be transmitted.

The campaign goes beyond increasing public awareness, however. As part of its resolution, the County Board of Education adopted six public confidence objectives that express the Board's commitment to program improvement. The six public confidence objectives are:

—Encourage schools to improve programs and instruction for students and citizens.

—Help citizens understand the value of education in our democratic society.

—Increase the personal experiences parents and nonparents have with the schools.

—Increase the public relations awareness and skills of educators.

—Increase the opportunities for the media to present a balanced view of the nation's schools.

—Encourage and enable educators to become effective leaders for education in their communities.

Participating districts and organizations will be asked to incorporate these objectives into their campaign efforts.

Preliminary planning efforts have already generated considerable interest from local districts, educational agencies, professional associations, and the private sector. This booklet is intended to explain to you what the campaign is, how it would work, and how you and your organization can participate.

CAMPAIGN COMPONENTS

There are five components of the campaign.

1. **Research**—Survey information is needed for planning strategies, targeting activities, and measuring the campaign's impact.
2. **Recruitment**—Materials and strategies are needed to convince local districts, agencies, and individuals to participate and contribute to the campaign. (That's one of the purposes of this booklet.)
3. **Training**—Representatives from districts and organizations need to be trained in how to select appropriate strategies for their targets and how to implement those strategies.
4. **Strategies by Target**—Activities, consumables, publications, and other campaign tools need to be cataloged according to the target audience they are intended to influence. Costs and contact people also need to be listed.
5. **Support**—Other kinds of support—private sector financial donations for in-kind contributions, for example—need to be sought. The Los Angeles County Schools Office will provide support by coordinating the campaign and organizing countywide events and activities.

HOW DOES THE CAMPAIGN WORK?

The campaign is based on the premise that the strategies and materials that are needed are already available in the county's school districts and agencies, but they need to be

coordinated in approach and imagery for use by all participating school districts. Some elements of the campaign (television and radio spots, for example) will need to be created from scratch, but the basic materials have already been created by some district or agency in Los Angeles County.

Participating school districts will do the following:

1. Obtain official endorsement from their governing boards, authorizing participation in the campaign. The endorsing resolution will authorize contributing in some fashion to the campaign in exchange for the right to have access to all developed and coordinated campaign material. The districts will also agree to use the theme and graphic material according to campaign guidelines.
2. A representative from the district will serve as the official link with the campaign headquarters and be authorized to accept responsibility for tasks or to make contributions in the form of material or staff time.
3. The representative will accept responsibility for tasks and campaign projects. The representative may also be asked to serve on one of several subcommittees responsible for specific campaign activities.
4. The representatives (or, more likely, a team of representatives) will be trained in how to implement the campaign in the district.
5. The representative or team will create an appropriate campaign plan for the district, using the resources available through the Strategy Inventory. The Strategy Inventory is a catalog of activities, publications, and other materials organized by target audiences. Participating school districts can take advantage of the listed strategies based on their campaign plan.
6. The representative will participate in countywide campaign activities to the best of the district's ability.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE

A large district's public information director presents the public confidence campaign concept to the district's board of education. The board adopts a resolution making the district a participant in the countywide public confidence campaign. The public information director is appointed the district's representative to the campaign.

As the district's public information director and the County Schools Office staff work together, they find that the district already has developed materials on a variety of subjects that could be used in the public confidence campaign. They decide

that one of the district's publications, "How to Get the Most from a Parent Conference," could be useful to many other participating districts.

The public information director "donates" the publication as part of the district's contribution to the countywide campaign. The district's name is removed and the campaign logo and slogan become the dominant image. The publication is suitable for use by any district in Los Angeles County and is included in the Strategy Inventory. After creating a campaign plan for the district, the public information director may use any of the Strategy Inventory ideas, many of which were created by other districts.

HERE'S ANOTHER EXAMPLE

A small district without a staff member assigned to public relations chooses to participate in the campaign. After board approval, an administrator is assigned to serve as the district's campaign representative. The administrator is trained in how the campaign can be started in the district, and a simple campaign plan is created.

One of the district's staff members has a good friend who is in management in a major supermarket chain. By using that contact, this district's contribution to the campaign is working with the supermarket chain to get display advertisements printed on shopping bags.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE CAMPAIGN WILL INCLUDE (WITH YOUR HELP)

Visibility items you can purchase:

- Pencils—You have to buy them anyway. They may as well carry the slogan.
- Reward stickers—Many teachers buy these to reward special effort by youngsters.
- T-shirt transfers—L.A. County has approximately 1.2 million potential walking commercials in its students. Transfers can be used as special awards for kids.
- Lapel pins—Everyone can show support for public education.
- "Good News" memo tablets—A simple way for your teachers to send good news home to parents.
- Bookcovers—Emblazoned with the campaign logo.

Activities your district can conduct:

- "See for Yourself" Campaign—An organized mini-campaign designed to get nonparents into your schools to see for themselves the good things going on.
- "Phone Home" Campaign—Teachers can make points with parents by systematically calling parents and briefly discussing a child's progress. Make it a district mini-campaign.
- "Project Citizenship"—Demonstrate your district's commitment to preparing young people to be good citizens.
- "Adopt-a-School"—Develop those important links between your district and your business community.

COUNTYWIDE VISIBILITY ACTIVITIES THAT WILL BENEFIT YOUR DISTRICT

- Television and radio public service announcements
- Campaign kickoff event
- Billboards
- Displays in shopping malls and at the L.A. County Fair

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Public education needs partners, and civic groups, social organizations, churches, and individual citizens can be those partners. In a campaign of this nature, there is plenty for everyone to do. Your group, agency, or organization can help the

public schools by endorsing the campaign and committing whatever time, money, or resources your organization feels is appropriate. In many cases, an organization or agency could help the campaign by accepting responsibility for specific projects, such as arranging for billboard space or preparing a display for the Los Angeles County Fair. Individual citizens can help by donating time or volunteering to make contacts with others who could help the campaign effort. In general, all that needs to be done to participate in the campaign is to call the Public Information Office of the Los Angeles County Schools Office. If you are a school district or an organization, here are your first steps:

1. If you need more information, call the public information officer of the Los Angeles County Schools Office, (213) 922-6369.
2. Have your organization's governing board adopt an endorsing resolution. (See sample resolution on page 8.)
3. Assign a campaign representative or a campaign team to coordinate the campaign locally.
4. Work like crazy!

ELEVEN NATIONAL AGENCIES

The eleven associations represented on the Forum (a coalition of eleven of the largest educational organizations in the country) are:

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Federation of Teachers
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Education Commission of the States
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National School Boards Association
- National Congress of Parents and Teachers
- National Education Association

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS a strong system of public education is vital to the strength of the communities of Los Angeles County, the State of California, and the United States of America; and

WHEREAS the success of the institution of public education rests in the support provided by parents, school staff, boards of education and other community leaders, businesses, government, and the general public; and

WHEREAS an important task for educators is to keep the public informed of the accomplishments, the challenges, the problems, and the direction of public education; and

WHEREAS the _____ _____ Board of Education considers the maintenance of a strong public education system to be an investment in the future of Los Angeles County; and

WHEREAS the Los Angeles County Board of Education has announced its desire to work with local school districts and others to coordinate a campaign to increase the public's understanding and support of public schools;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the _____ _____ Board of Education join with the Los Angeles County Board of Education, other school districts, and agencies in Los Angeles County in the campaign effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the _____ _____ Board of Education support the following public confidence objectives:

—Encourage schools to improve programs and instruction for students and citizens.
—Help citizens understand the value of education in our democratic society.
—Increase the personal experiences parents and nonparents have with the schools.
—Increase the public relations awareness and skills of educators.
—Increase the opportunities for the media to present a balanced view of the nation's schools.
—Encourage and enable educators to become effective leaders for education in their communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the _____ Board of Education adopts the theme, "Public Education: A Sound Investment in America," and authorizes participation by district staff and students in the campaign.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 1983, by the _____ _____ Board of Education in Los Angeles County, California.

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